

## Reader comments on 'Communist Tactics'

# Tactical blunders hurt rank and file

In my opinion the recent article about communist tactics in the labor movement, part two of the labor perspective series, was the best piece of public analysis yet to appear on the question. If the Party sticks to its strategic orientation, as I'm sure it will, and at the same time gives full play to the type of tactical flexibility the article advocates, soon we will see a great increase of Party influence and a marked improvement in work with trade unionists.

Especially good was the summation of errors around the Culinary election in San Francisco. I wonder if more thought has been given to the question of the mistakes made by McDonald once victory was at hand?

It's inevitable, given the growing sophistication of the Party's approach, that soon other activists will find themselves in a somewhat similar situation as McDonald, faced with the task of running a union. Apart from McDonald's capitulation, which the article criticized, it's impor-

tant to expose the tactical naiveté that, in my opinion, helped to contribute to the rapid fall from power of the rank and file forces.

The S.F. Culinary workers union is quite large, very diverse, with many small and scattered shops. Pensions funds and benefit plans are extremely complex, and the sums of money that cross union desks each week are staggering. The industry has a long history and many of the "laws" and procedures which have governed its operations are unwritten, owing to the fact that Belardi and his cohorts have always dominated the scene.

Needless to say, the rank and file forces, led by McDonald, entered the picture without an extensive base, with only a superficial grasp of industry and union operations, and virtually no administrative experience.

The election victory was very close and less than a third of the union members even voted. McDonald and the other elected rank and filers were in the minority on the executive board.

McDonald, however, made no real analysis of the situation. No attempt was made to split the opposition forces. To the contrary, McDonald's first official act was an ill-advised and ill-fated attempt to sweep the board clean of his opponents. In other words, his approach was to strike out in all directions at once.

McDonald's efforts to maintain his own power by playing under the table with the international should be called for what it was: a sell-out of the rank and file. But it's also important to look and see how other mistakes he made left the local wide open for an immediate counter-attack from the international.

In my opinion the new leadership could at least have bought some time to consolidate their victory and spread their influence in an organized way among the union members as a whole. Of course, it was absolutely necessary to push forward the Zims strike and it's clear that the international frowned on the

new regime. They might have struck, sooner or later, to retake the local; but this was not a foregone conclusion.

In my opinion, McDonald's failure to take a protracted approach in the struggle to rid the union of reactionary die-hards, contributed greatly to the speed of the international's sweeping counter-offensive.

Other errors, including problems with union funds and legal representation, also helped set the rank and file up for attack. All in all, not only were Right errors made, which your article exposed, but there were, in my opinion, serious "Left" blunders which at least need to be looked into.

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The Call's two-part series, "Communist Tactics in the Labor Movement," was printed in the Feb. 19 and March 12 issues. They are available for 25¢ each by writing to The Call, P.O. Box 5597, Chicago, Ill. 60680